

3.0 WHAT PEOPLE THINK – *Planning for the Future*

3.1 Community Involvement Process

Early and on-going collaboration involving town department staff, the West Concord Task Force, local property and business owners, and area residents was an integral component of the Master Plan process. Meaningful public involvement in the exploration of development and design alternatives and public support for preferred scenarios was deemed essential by the West Concord Task Force in gaining acceptance and implementation of the Master Plan. Several formal and informal community outreach methods were utilized (as outlined below) to present information and scenarios and help build consensus and understanding of future opportunities in West Concord:

- Project kick-off meeting;
- Regular meetings with the West Concord Task Force and Master Plan Working Group;
- Community surveys – residents, business owners, and visual preference surveys;
- Regular website updates on the town's homepage;
- Newspaper columns and announcements of upcoming Master Plan events;
- Regular “office hours” with the Master Plan consultant;
- “Lunch Talk” at Debra’s Natural Gourmet with the Master Plan consultant; and
- Presentation of alternative scenarios and conceptual plans at the scenario building workshops and design workshop.

“Small town, friendly, service oriented, affordable, and a little funky.”

West Concord as described in the 2007 Village Centers Study

3.2 Defining the Challenges and Opportunities

Based on the data and information collected in Section 2.0, an assessment was made of specific physical, operational, design, policy, and regulatory challenges and future opportunities to enhance and improve the West Concord Village Center.

Previously Identified Challenges and Opportunities

2007 West Concord Village – As part of the visioning process for the Concord Village Centers Study, extensive discussions occurred during community workshops and many committee and subcommittee meetings conducted in 2006 and 2007 to identify the issues and opportunities in West Concord village center. A summary of **planning ideas and inspirations** for West Concord identified by participants are listed below (in no particular order):



- Preserve character and feel of West Concord Center.
- Manage future development to keep village scale along Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue.
- Plan for possible expansion and redevelopment of mixed-use sites (sites where a variety of uses are located that may include appropriate industrial, office, retail, and/or residential uses) in the older industrial areas that will continue the scale of the village connecting to Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue.
- Alleviate traffic congestion by reconfiguring circulation through the town (for example, traffic loops or circles, extending streets, or using one-way directions).
- Address location of parking and delivery spaces to discourage “strip mall” look.
- Improve aesthetics by providing design guidelines and implementing design review/control.
- Increase and facilitate (well lit) pedestrian movement throughout West Concord Center.
- Promote open space enhancements and networks, particularly along the river, brooks, and ponds.

The following lists are representative of key issues raised to provide background for the recommendations contained in the Concord Village Center Study report. The lists provide three perspectives of those participating. The first category considers those aspects of the village center that should not be changed – or as a practical matter, will not change. The second category focuses on the characteristics that must change because they are in conflict with community goals. The third category describes those characteristics that are subject to change and require planning to meet the community's goals. These categories are important to the planning process because different tools are used to preserve important characteristics, to promote desirable change and to influence results that are consistent with community goals.

Characteristics in West Concord Village that must not or will not change:

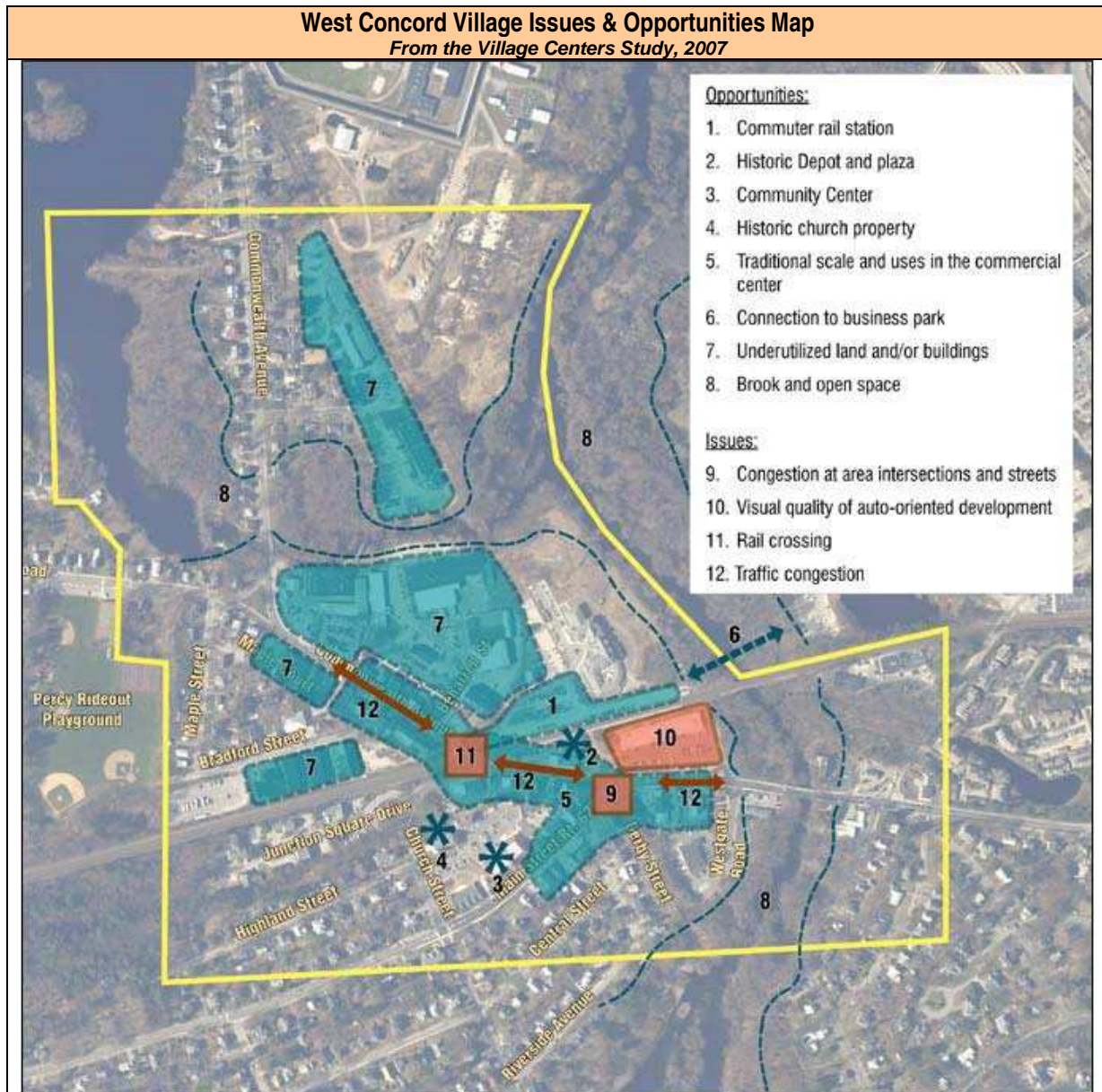
- The existing character and “feel” of the central portions of the Commonwealth Ave. business district must not change.
- The existing character and “feel” of the central portions of the Commonwealth Avenue business district must not change.
- The nearby open space and wetland areas must be preserved.
- The area's recreation fields are necessary and will remain.
- The Community Center is an essential component.
- The historic church properties will remain.
- The historic Depot Building and adjacent public space are essential elements.
- The Depot parking lot is central to the area's activity and function.
- The new senior living project will remain.
- The post office is an anchor for the area.

Characteristics in West Concord Village that must change:

- The open space adjacent to the depot should be improved.
- The visual character of the retail “strip” along the north side of [Main Street] must be improved.
- Some of the existing underutilized parcels along the rail line must be improved or redeveloped.
- Appropriate use of the abandoned rail right-of-way must be determined.
- The open spaces and green spaces must be connected to create an understandable network for pedestrians.
- Visual connection to the brook must be enhanced.
- Traffic conditions along Commonwealth Ave. must be improved.
- Wayfinding and circulation patterns must be improved.
- A better connection must be created to the business park adjacent to Baker Avenue.

Characteristics in West Concord Village that may change and require a special planning initiative:

- Several prominent buildings need to be rehabilitated or redeveloped because of their poor condition.
- The triangle/green at the intersection of Laws Brook and Commonwealth could be enhanced.
- Uses along the northern portions of Main Street may be changed and the properties appropriately redeveloped.
- There may be opportunities to appropriately redevelop the industrial properties between the post office and abandoned railroad line.
- Public open spaces and plazas could be improved and better linked to their surroundings.
- Rideout Playground parking could be expanded.



2008 West Concord Call to Action – In addition to the major issues identified in the 2007 Concord Village Centers Study, the West Concord Call to Action, approved by the 2008 Annual Town Meeting, identified wastewater treatment plant capacity questions, the Route 2 rotary redesign, the proposed MBTA improvements, and preservation and protection of historical resources as additional issues to be added to the list. Underlying these major planning issues are the following questions:

- What role does Concord, specifically West Concord, want to play in regional transportation (including parking, roadways, commuter rail and rail trail)?
- What level of population growth and economic development is sustainable for West Concord?
- How will West Concord deal with ownership changes in properties, including issues of zoning and controls?
- What townwide impact will the decisions made in West Concord have on such areas as schools, taxes, and wastewater planning?

Goals and objectives toward “maintaining the character of West Concord” identified by the Call to Action were as follows:

- Maintain the village's vibrant and diverse businesses, many of which are locally owned.
- Preserve the character of the village scale by improving aesthetics and through the use of design guidelines.
- Preserve, protect, and enhance use of and access to the village's natural resources
- Educate residents about the village's historic significance and protect its historic resources.
- Maintain and encourage its mixed use of housing and business;
- Protect the integrity of the residential neighborhoods;
- Continue to offer affordable rents for business opportunities; and
- Address transportation and circulation issues that impact the village center.

2008 West Concord Task Force – The West Concord Task Force (WCTF) was appointed by the Board of Selectmen after the passage of the Call to Action at Concord's Annual Town Meeting in April 2008. The Task Force further defined the challenges and opportunities facing the village, which served as parameters for preparing the Master Plan:

- Preserve **character and feel** of West Concord Village.
- Plan for possible expansion and **redevelopment of mixed-use sites** (sites where a variety of uses are located that may include appropriate industrial, office, retail, and/or residential uses) in the older industrial areas that will continue the scale, massing, and other relevant urban design features of the village connecting to Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue.
- Define future demand and strategic ideas for **wastewater management**.
- Integrate applications of **sustainability** principles, renewable energy technologies, and green building, site, and systems designs.
- **Alleviate traffic congestion** by exploring opportunities to reconfigure circulation through the town (for example, traffic loops or circles, extending streets or using one-way directions, improving non-motor-vehicle access, or other techniques).
- Address location of **parking and delivery** spaces to discourage "strip-mall" look and encourage a traditional storefront commercial district look and feel.
- Improve the efficiency and **effectiveness of the existing parking** supply with proposed redesign and/or management strategies.
- Improve aesthetics by developing **design guidelines** and providing for a formal design review/control set of criteria and process.
- Utilize zoning bylaw amendments and **new zoning tools** to facilitate design elements and address other site development concerns identified during the planning process.
- Increase and **facilitate pedestrian movement** throughout West Concord Village, including appropriate lighting and connections.
- Promote **open space enhancements** and networks/connectivity, particularly along the river, brooks, and ponds.
- **Enhance links** to nearby business areas and natural resources.
- Establish effective **graphic identity and way-finding signage** while limiting the amount of new signage.
- Support, enhance, and help preserve independent **locally owned businesses** (through mechanisms such as formula business restrictions, space restrictions, or set-asides for local retail).
- Recognize and provide protection and/or **opportunity for start-up and studio-type small businesses**, including artists' space and potentially live/work space.
- Increase **housing options** within the immediate village area utilizing smart growth principles and appropriate affordability ratios.
- Integrate and accommodate the **Bruce Freeman Rail Trail** as it passes through the village.

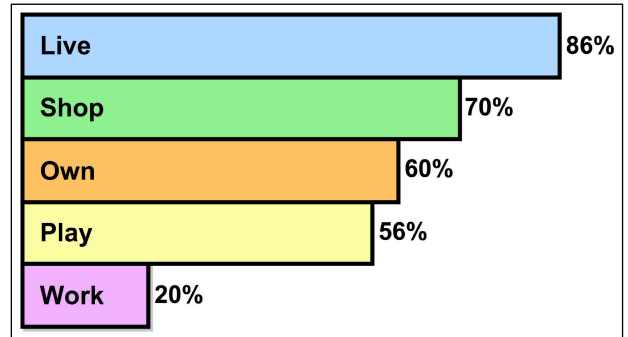
3.3 Creating the Vision

Resident Surveys

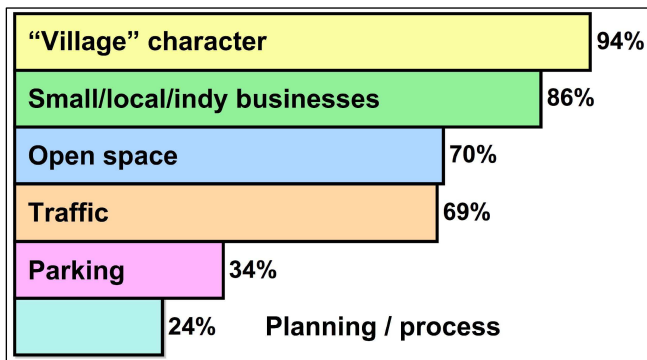
To begin addressing its charge, the West Concord Task Force (WCTF) chose to conduct a public survey. Public surveys had been conducted in the past, most notably as part of the 2007 Village Centers Study, but even in the year since the Village Centers Study, significant changes had occurred, primarily with the ownership of strategic

commercial properties on Beharrell Street and Bradford Street and with these ownership changes came increased public awareness and sensitivity about the potential impacts from redevelopment of these properties to West Concord's character.

The WCTF distributed the West Concord resident survey during the fall/winter of 2008–2009 to discover any recent changes in public opinions about West Concord. Approximately 1,500 surveys were distributed at the Harvey Wheeler Community polling station on Election Day, which includes Concord precincts 2 and 3 comprising all of West Concord except for a small corner consisting primarily of Concord Greene.



A total of 200 survey forms were collected from November 2008, through February 2009 (a response rate of 13%). The figure here shows survey respondents' connection to West Concord. Only 23 of the 200 surveys were submitted anonymously. Four respondents live outside of Concord, of whom three work in West Concord and the fourth works in Concord. (The full results of the survey are included in Appendix 3.)



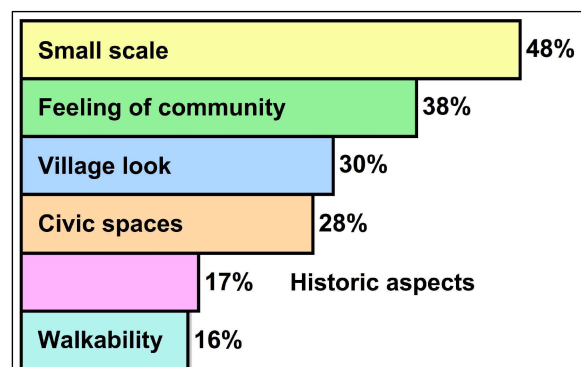
Survey participant comments from the open-ended survey were broken down according to "areas of concern" about the West Concord village. The figure to the left gives an overview of the results, showing that the major areas of concern are West Concord's character (94%) and small/local/independent businesses (86%), with high emphasis as well on traffic and open space (about 70% each) and significant concern about pedestrian/bicycle access (53%), mass transit (38%), parking (34%), and

planning and process aspects of government (24%). Given that the West Concord Task Force was created in response to the Call to Action, recent changes in property ownership and anticipated development pressures on West Concord's business and industrial areas, it is no surprise that so many respondents put high emphasis on these areas in commenting on retail and small businesses and in tying them to West Concord's character.

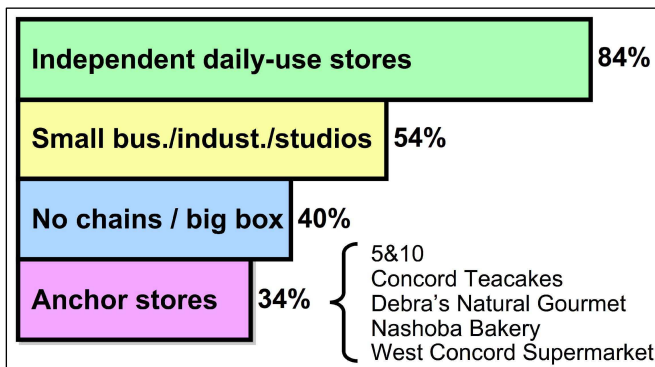
Concern Over Village Character – A total of 94% of surveys mentioned any aspect of West Concord's character, explicitly or by implication; 56% of surveys mentioned character explicitly. The figure next shows the facets of West Concord's character that respondents most highlighted. Business, transportation, open space, housing, and several other issues were also identified as contributing factors to West Concord's character by survey respondents.

Small, Local, and Independently Owned Businesses

A total of 86% of surveys mentioned some aspect of retail or other business, or business or industrial land use. People showed most concern for the small, independent retail stores that provide for people's daily needs and are the lifeblood of the village center. Running a close second, however, are the small, independent businesses, especially startups, artist's workshops, and studios that usefully inhabit old spaces left over from West Concord's days as the industrial-based Concord Junction. These



businesses provide jobs, some to residents, and give West Concord an interesting, lively, “funky” feel while helping to preserve the memory of the past. Eighteen percent of surveys specifically mentioned maintaining low rents or costs for small, local, independent retail and other similar businesses.



Survey respondents identified threats to local, independent businesses including chain stores, which return profits to a distant corporate headquarters and big box stores, which do the same and add massive parking needs and increased traffic, and “boutiquification”—a term used to describe an influx of small, high-price stores that sell luxury merchandise that don’t cater to local people’s daily needs, usually leading to higher commercial rents and increased out-of-town traffic (since customers must be drawn from a wider area to support stores where any particular

customer shops infrequently).

A total of 40% of respondents specifically mentioned their opposition to chains (including big box stores) and 10% specifically mentioned galleries or boutiques or employed such creative terms as “boutiquification” or “gallerization.” A single chain drug store, for example, was identified as a concern as it could put several local retail stores out of business, causing a “chain reaction” as those stores would likely be replaced by other chains or boutiques, unraveling more and more threads of West Concord village center.

Respondents mentioned many existing businesses by name or type; in all, 36 different existing businesses or business types were named. The five (5) most commonly mentioned stores were (in alphanumeric order) the 5&10, Concord Teacakes, Debra’s Natural Gourmet, the Nashoba Brook Bakery, and the West Concord Supermarket. Each of these stores was mentioned by name in at least 15 surveys; one was mentioned in 60 surveys. Respondents particularly mentioned how these (and other) stores provide goods and services to the community that are useful in daily life.

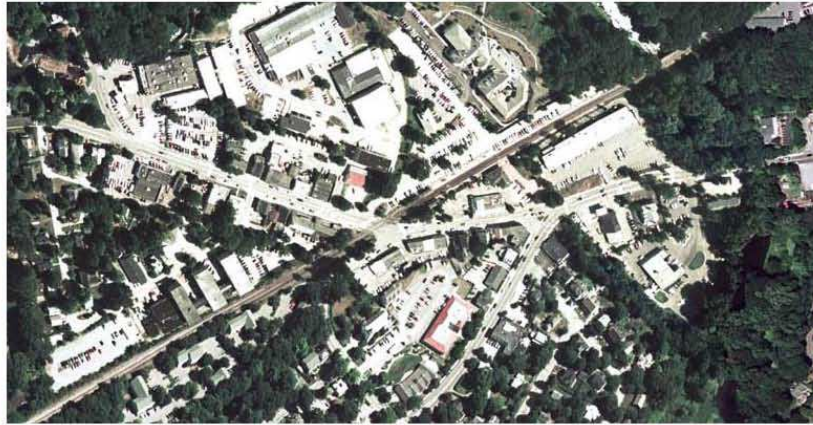
One of the conclusions reached by the West Concord Task Force was the realization that aesthetic improvements and modernization or replacement of existing buildings are both potential benefit and threat to local, independent businesses. Both require money and, therefore, tend to raise costs and rents while creating an attractive environment for private investment and business development. Some of West Concord’s oldest buildings have been maintained to a minimal degree over the last few decades, leading to low rents for business, but this low-level of maintenance cannot continue as buildings naturally deteriorate. Key properties in West Concord village are likely to be redeveloped in the relatively near future. A key challenge for the community will be how to allow redevelopment to take place while retaining enough daily-use stores, low-rent startup spaces, workshops, and industrial history to preserve West Concord’s character and functionality.

Business Owner Surveys

During the summer of 2009, The West Concord Task Force conducted a business owner survey to analyze market conditions and develop strategies for improving the business climate in West Concord Village. A series of questions regarding business, operational, and customer profiles were asked as well as directions and priorities for West Concord village center. The primary purpose was to determine what improvements would best help local business development and general economic activity in the village center over the next 10 years. The full results of the Business Owners Survey are included in Appendix 3.

West Concord Village

Existing Conditions, Challenges & Opportunities



EXISTING CONDITIONS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Preserve character and feel of West Concord Village.
- Plan for possible expansion and redevelopment of mixed-use sites (sites where a variety of uses are located that may include appropriate industrial, office, retail and/or residential use) in the older industrial areas that will continue the scale, massing and other relevant urban design features of the village connecting to Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue.
- Define future demand and strategic ideas for wastewater management.
- Integrate applications of sustainability principals, renewable energy technologies and green building, site and systems designs.
- Alleviate traffic congestion by exploring opportunities to reconfigure circulation through the town (for example traffic loops or circles, extending streets or using one-way directions, improving non-motor-vehicle access, or other technique).
- Address location of parking and delivery spaces to discourage "strip-mall" look and encourage a traditional storefront commercial district look and feel.
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing parking supply with proposed redesign and/or management strategies.
- Improve aesthetics by evaluating existing design guidelines and providing for a formal design review/control set of criteria and process.
- Utilize zoning bylaw amendments and new zoning tools to facilitate design elements and address other site development concerns identified during the planning process.
- Increase and facilitate pedestrian movement throughout West Concord Village considering appropriate lighting and clarity.
- Promote open space enhancements and networks/connectivity, particularly along the river, brooks and ponds.
- Enhance links to nearby business areas and natural resources.
- Establish effective graphic identity and way-finding signage while limiting the amount of new signage.
- Support, enhance and help preserve independent locally owned businesses (through mechanisms such as formula business restrictions, space restrictions or setbacks for local retail).
- Recognize and provide protection and/or opportunity for start-up and studio-type small businesses, including artists' space and potentially live/work space.
- Increase housing options within the immediate village area utilizing smart growth principals and appropriate affordable ratios.
- Integrate and accommodate the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail as it passes through the village.

For larger version of this image see Appendix 5

WCTF Scenario Building Workshop

The West Concord Task Force conducted two (2) scenario building workshops during the summer of 2009. The objectives of these workshops were to:

- Review the findings from the assessment of prior village center planning initiatives;
- Discuss challenges and opportunities facing the village center;
- Define the values and guiding principles that should direct redevelopment in the village center and relationship to surrounding neighborhoods;
- Define long-term goals and broad scale concerns of the district; and
- Review a preliminary concept plan and begin to narrow down preferred alternatives and themes.

Base plans, maps, photos, transect, and cross sections of the village center and surrounding neighborhoods were prepared by the Master Plan consultant and displayed for the workshops. Preliminary concept plans were also prepared based on a review of previous planning initiatives, input from stakeholders and recent feedback from the general public. The Task Force began the “scenario building” process by focusing on overall values and principles for West Concord, presenting potential public enhancements and redevelopment locations, and identifying their associated strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These workshops helped identify points on which stakeholders and residents agree or disagree, and provided a starting point for working through these differences to build a common framework. This framework shaped the subsequent design stages of the master planning process including the Community Design Workshop.

Community Design Workshop

The West Concord Task Force hosted a two-day Community Design Workshop in September 2009 as part of the West Concord Master Plan process. The primary purpose of the workshop was to obtain broad public participation in determining the community’s desired scale, composition, and character of public and private changes as illustrated in conceptual design and potential future development scenarios of the village center. An estimated 250 to 300 people turned out over the two-day workshop.

The community design workshop included a series of **Theme Boards** identifying the major issues to be addressed in the Master Plan including the following:

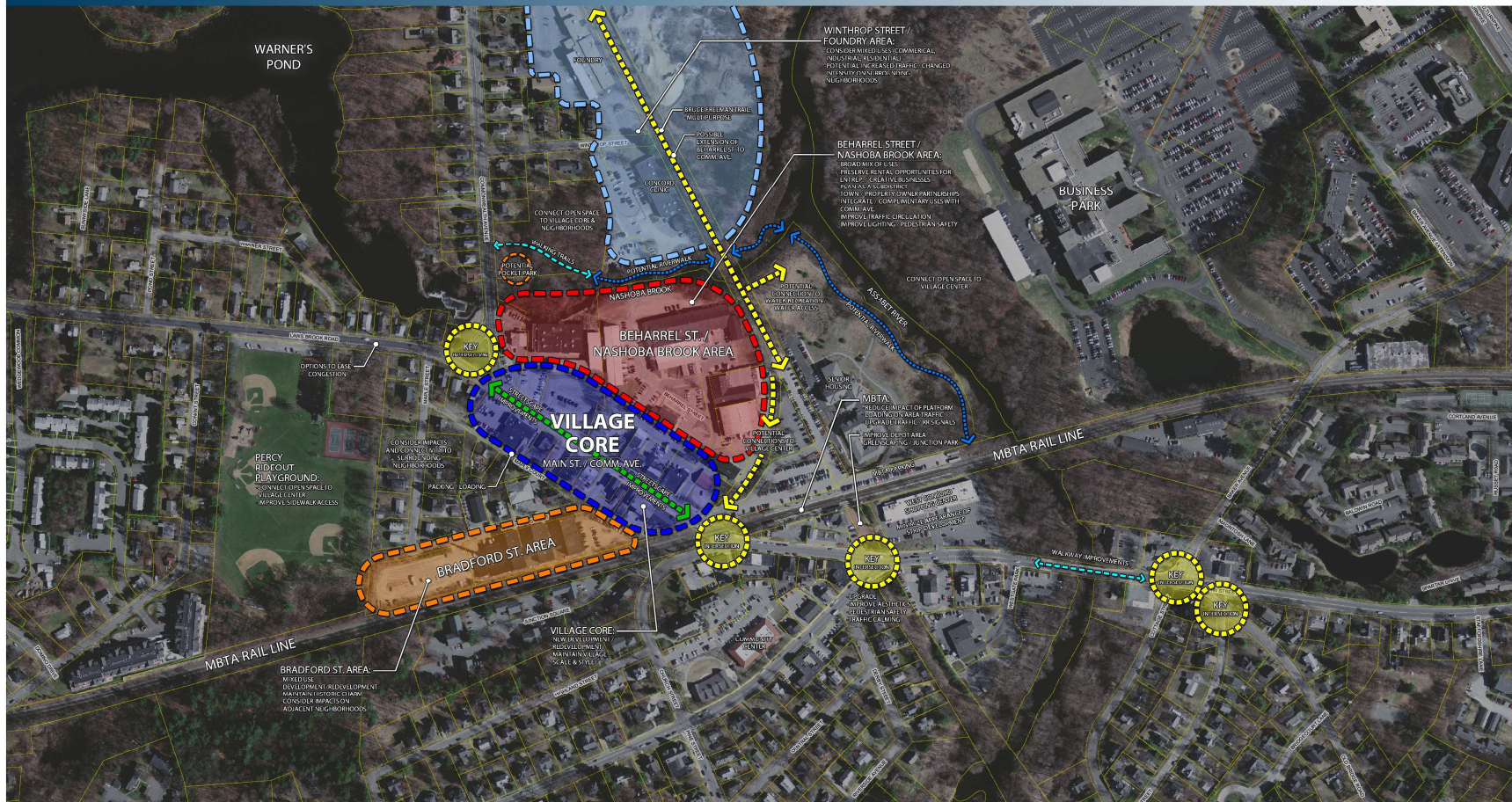
- Transportation Network and Circulation
- Streetscape and Parking
- Parks, Open Space, and Trails
- New Development, Redevelopment and Property Reuse

Under each of the theme boards, numerous conceptual scenarios were posted identifying and illustrating potential opportunities for property rehabilitation and redevelopment, new development, infrastructure improvements, trails, open space and other recreation amenities, neighborhood connections, parking and roadway access improvements, and streetscape enhancements.



West Concord Village

Village Master Plan - April 2009



DESIGN AND REVIEW PROCESS:

- REVIEW ZONING (FOCUS ON DISTRICTS / MAP, DENSITY, DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS, USES, PARKING FLEXIBILITY)
- CREATE DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SITE DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHITECTURE
- NO HISTORIC DISTRICT BUILDING INFILL / NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD ENHANCE TRADITIONAL VILLAGE STYLE AND CHARACTERISTICS
- REVIEW / ADJUST SIGN BYLAWS TO ENHANCE VILLAGE CHARACTER / SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES



For larger version of this image see Appendix 5

The Community Design Workshop was an open and informal venue. Participants were provided the opportunity to work one-on-one with town staff, Task Force members, and the Master Plan consultants to share ideas, provide feedback on preliminary scenarios, and create new illustrations for various public and private improvements throughout the village. This collaborative effort resulted in several new future scenarios and concept plans. At the conclusion, Town staff and the Master Plan consultant presented an overview of the feedback collected during the workshop.

Based on the results of the scenario building workshops and the Community Design Workshop, the following West Concord design principals were established:

Connectivity – Existing infrastructure and future development/redevelopment projects in West Concord will capitalize on public and private investments in roadway, intersection and trail improvements that will enhance safe connections and improve traffic patterns. These improvements will, in turn, create the major impetus for new private investment.

Mixed Uses – Within the uses allowed by the zoning districts, the continued development and redevelopment of West Concord should create a compatible mix of activities and uses that support the existing local businesses.

Entrepreneurship, Business Start-up, and Local Ownership – In order to maintain and enhance local ownership and small business development, it is essential that West Concord continue to provide an ample stock of lower cost commercial and light industrial space.

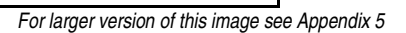


Sustainability – The long-term impacts associated with West Concord development and redevelopment must be compatible with the need to preserve the quality of life for current residents while sustaining the environment for future generations.

Open Space, Trails, and Public Gathering Places – Open spaces in West Concord are important because they create visual interest and provide visual and physical relief, they promote passive and active use, provide locations for programmed activities that attract potential customers, and protect natural resources.

Cooperation for Value Enhancement – High-quality development is expected in the business zoned areas within West Concord. Construction within the village overall should enhance the local tax base and public realm. Continued town investment in public infrastructure will promote higher quality development and redevelopment.

Design Coordination – There are many and various public and private projects anticipated within the village center over the next ten years and it will be important to recognize the value of good design that is coordinated between these projects as well as design that takes into consideration the connections between the core business area and residential neighborhoods, as well as the other villages in Concord.



Visual Preference Surveys

A Visual Preference Survey¹ (VPS) was conducted by the WCTF as part of the Community Design Workshop in September and online during the month of October 2009. The goal of this survey was to understand and define the community's priorities and design preferences so they would then be reflected in recommendations for conceptual development, public enhancements, land use regulations, and design guidelines.

What is the "character" of West Concord?

*Defining the character of West Concord is a difficult but important question that has led to some very vague or esoteric answers in the community. People sometimes don't know how to put their feelings about village and neighborhood design into words, so they resort to listing examples from other places but not every community has the geographic or historic context that make other communities work the way they do. Sometimes it is best to give up on words and to toss aside the jargon of terms and phrases that separates us from the physical world we are attempting to design around us. We can see what we like, and what we don't like, but most people can't draw for you what they'd like to see, and having designers draw and redraw development options just isn't efficient. A **Visual Preference Survey (VPS)** is a visual format for public input where participants respond to images of development, land use, and public infrastructure and rank them according to their own tastes. The images are then used to illustrate the preferred types of change people prefer in the Village over time. People know what they like, even if they can't find a way to communicate it. This is the basis of the Visual Preference Survey, a term coined by A. Nelessen Associates. The Visual Preference Survey is a method of gathering information from the stakeholders of a planning area (such as a village) by showing a variety of images in a short period of time and collecting their reactions to the features conveyed in each image.*











For the West Concord VPS, a variety of images were gathered in the community and from a host of comparable places, mostly in New England. The choices for images used were based on the following criteria:








- *What are the intended products of the West Concord Master Plan?* – This led to the inclusion of potential building and property uses, traffic and parking improvements, streetscape enhancements, parks and open spaces, and wayfinding sign options.
- *What are the goals and priorities of the Task Force?* – This led to the inclusion of small village development and public open space options.
- *What are the ranges of public opinion?* – This led to the inclusion of images showing different mixes, scales, densities, and variations on type of architecture based on previous studies and public surveys.
- *What may be necessary to support the types of potential development?* – This led to the inclusion of public infrastructure enhancements such as streetscape and parking.




The West Concord visual survey form provided participants the opportunity to numerically rank the images with a maximum range of +3 (desired) to -3 (not desired), with 0 being neutral. The survey was broken down into six (6) parts:

- Part 1 - Building Design, Density, and Use – including images of adaptive reuse, building design, building scale and height, neighborhoods/residential development, and street enclosure.
- Part 2 - Building Frontage, Display, and Signs – including images of accessory displays, façade treatments, frontage uses, signs and awnings, and window displays.
- Part 3 - Gateway and Wayfinding Treatments – including images of business directories, directional sign systems, gateway treatments, and informational kiosks.
- Part 4 – Parks, Open Spaces, Trails and Public Art – including images of open spaces, parks, public art and focal points, and trails.
- Part 5 - Streetscape and Pedestrian Treatments – including images of alleys, sidewalk design and uses, furnishings, and landscaping.
- Part 6 - Traffic Circulation and Parking – including intersection treatments, off-street parking, on-street parking, road design, traffic calming techniques and intermodal transportation.

¹ The Visual Preference Survey is a registered trademark of A. Nelessen Associates (ANA).

West Concord Visual Preference Survey Results Summary and Preferred Images (Full results of the VPS are included in Appendix 3)					
Part 1 - Building Design, Density and Use					
	Adaptive Reuse	Building Design	Building Height and Scale	Neighborhoods / Residential Development	Street Enclosure
Preferred Image					
Average Score	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.5
Standard Deviation	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3
Total Responses	134	137	132	132	122
Part 2 - Building Frontage, Display and Signs					
	Accessory Displays	Facades	Frontage Uses	Signs and Awnings	Window Display
Preferred Image					
Average Score	1.7	1.2	1.7	1.5	1.8
Standard Deviation	1.2	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.2
Total Responses	128	126	127	123	121

<i>Part 3 - Gateway and Wayfinding Treatments</i>					
	Business Directories	Directional Sign Systems	Gateway Treatments	Informational Kiosks	
Preferred Image					
Average Score	1.2	0.9	0.3	0.8	
Standard Deviation	1.5	1.4	2.0	1.5	
Total Responses	128	117	127.0	123	
<i>Part 4 - Parks, Open Spaces, Trails and Public Art</i>					
	Open Spaces	Parks	Public Art and Focal Points	Trails	
Preferred Image					
Average Score	1.9	2.4	0.9	2	
Standard Deviation	1.3	0.8	1.5	1.3	
Total Responses	127	129	125	130	

Part 5 - Streetscape and Pedestrian Treatments					
	Alleys	Sidewalk Design and Uses	Furnishings	Landscaping	
Preferred Image					
Average Score	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	
Standard Deviation	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.2	
Total Responses	131	121	122	120	
Part 6 - Traffic Circulation and Parking					
	Intersections	Off-Street Parking	On-Street Parking	Road Design	Traffic Calming / Intermodal
Preferred Image					
Average Score	1.4	0.8	0.8	1.2	1.2
Standard Deviation	1.2	1.4	1.8	1.5	1.5
Total Responses	113	110	118	117	112

133 Total Survey Responses = 91 from Community Design Workshop and 42 On-line at

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB229PEP8KEQ6>

West Concord Village (93);
Concord (54), Nearby Town
(3), Elsewhere (4)

A total of 91 surveys were filled out at the Community Design Workshop and an additional 45 surveys were completed online for a total of 136 responses. The table above provides a summary of the West Concord Visual Preference Survey. (The full results are included in Appendix 3.)

The results from the West Concord Visual Preference Survey have been used by the Task Force to better understand the community's design preferences and guide the preparation of the conceptual Master Plan, design guidelines, and revisions to land use regulations that promote appropriate development while providing public infrastructure, streetscape, and open space enhancements suitable for West Concord. It is important to point out that there are numerous examples of buildings in West Concord that are cherished by the community but do not meet current zoning standards. This is a major impetus for preparing design guidelines and revising the regulations so that they are more in keeping with the community's vision for the future. What the Visual Preference Survey provides is clarity on design, density, and use considerations that should be addressed in the zoning regulations and design guidelines for West Concord.

3.4 Future Development Parameters and Themes

Traditional village centers like West Concord are characterized by compact mixed-use settlement patterns, a community focal point (such as a village common), moderate density, quality design, traditional regional architecture, and pedestrian (as opposed to auto) orientation. They offer basic employment, services, and shopping for their residents as well as for visitors and those living in the surrounding areas.

General Design Characteristics for Traditional Village Centers ²	
Characteristic	Guideline
Gross Land Area	100 to 500 acres
Dwelling Units (DU)	100 to 600 DU
Net DU/acre	1 to 8 (or 5,445 to 43,560 s.f./DU)
Population	200 to 1,800 residents
Jobs: Housing Ratio (at 200-350 s.f. per job)	0.75:1 to 1.75:1
Percentage of Overall Open Space	45% to 70% district-wide
Percentage of Public Open Space	3% to 8% district-wide
Local Retail Space	26 to 52 s.f./DU
Civic Space	300 s.f./DU minimum
Town Common or Green Space	200 s.f./DU minimum
Water Treatment	Community or public wells
Sewage Treatment	Community or public wastewater treatment system

Traditional village centers also provide civic facilities and activities for social interactions. All of these village characteristics should be provided for within about a quarter-mile of the “main street” (or commercial mixed-use spine) of the center. These characteristics indicate that traditional village centers are strongly supported by surrounding neighborhoods, local employment opportunities, and civic uses. Some general design characteristics for a traditional village center to be incorporated into the overall concept plan for West Concord village center are as follows:

Attractive Viewsheds and Gateways – The Commonwealth Avenue/Main Street Corridor should be visually distinct from surrounding landscapes. It should create a “sense of arrival” as one approaches the village center through a series of changes in land uses, topography, organization and density of buildings, and formal streetscapes. The West Concord village center includes a series of attractive viewsheds but few gateway features. As one travels through segments of the corridor, important visual characteristics in the core area between Junction Park and Bradford Street deteriorate into a series of strip development and limited streetscapes. This aesthetic issue needs to be addressed as the village continues to develop through a combination of attractive gateway treatments, infill buildings and existing building renovations with traditional village design and architecture, and formal streetscape improvements such as sidewalks, street trees, bicycle paths, and ornamental lighting. Additionally, some of West Concord's key natural attributes such as the Nashoba Brook, the Assabet River, and

² From *Visions for a New American Dream*, Anton Clarence Nelessen, 1993.

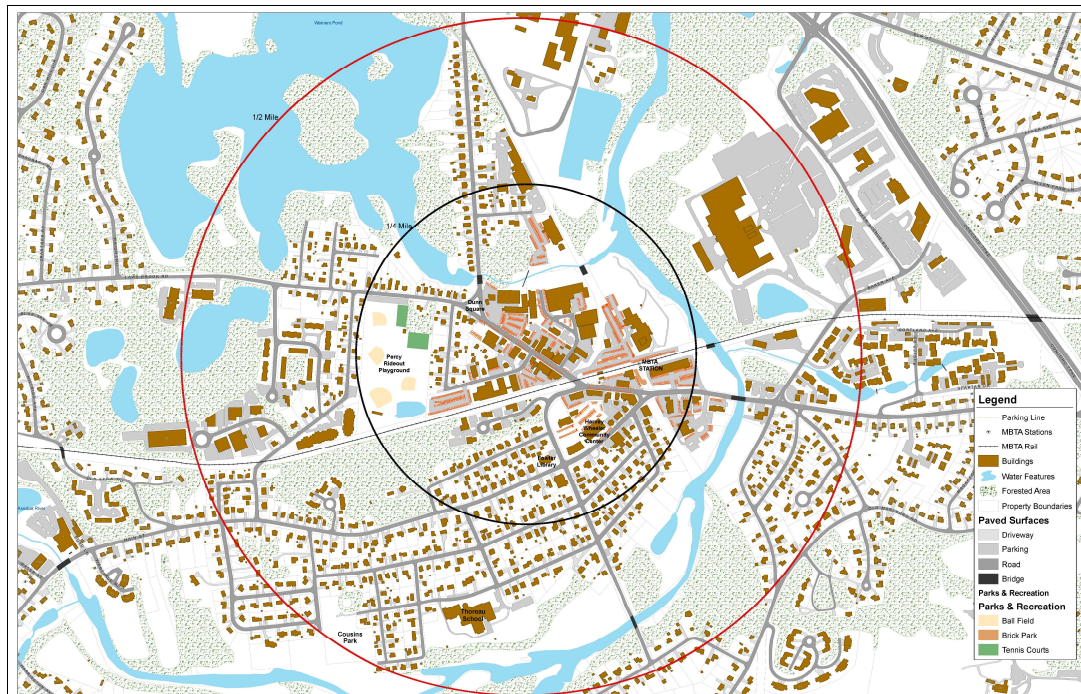
Warner's Pond need to be better connected visually and physically to the Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue area and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Pedestrian Orientation – A key characteristic of successful village centers is that they are pedestrian-oriented. They also typically have a reasonable number of homes (100 to 600 representing the primary village customers) within a comfortable walking distance of the core area in order to be economically viable. The table below identifies the pedestrian precincts (walking distances) for traditional village centers such as West Concord, which represents

Village Center Pedestrian Precincts			
Precinct	Radius (Feet)	Approx. Acres	Approx Walking Time (Min.)
1	750	41	Under 3
2	1,500	162	5
3	2,000	230	8
4	2,640	500	10

a comfortable walking distance between key points of public interest and the majority of village residents. The maximum distance that most people would be willing to walk is half a mile, which takes about 10 minutes on average (Pedestrian Precinct 4). The West Concord pedestrian precinct map (in Section 2) indicates that the village center core area would be within half a mile of most existing neighborhoods and potential new residential

developments in the project area. This graphic illustrates how important residential development is to a village center as well as civic and commercial uses that can draw area residents who are not within walking distance.



For larger version of this image see Appendix 5

The Pedestrian Precincts in West Concord

Mixed Uses – The long-term viability of West Concord is dependent on the continued opportunities and flexibility of commercial, professional, light industrial, and residential uses. A combination of uses including retail, food and entertainment, professional services, light manufacturing and trades, recreational, cultural, and governmental must continue to be permitted in the village center if West Concord is to continue to serve as a “place of necessity” for residents, an attraction for visitors, and a viable option for prospective small businesses and investors. Well placed professional offices and residential uses (optimally on upper floors and on side streets) fill vacant/underutilized spaces, create investment, provide built-in security, and reduce traffic (i.e., ideally, one can live, work, shop, and eat all within walking distance). Only truly incompatible uses of auto-oriented design should be separated from the village center.

Traditional Village Development Patterns – West Concord village center has a scale and layout distinct from all places in Concord. In the core area, new development should be built with pedestrians in mind (close or up to the

sidewalk and adjacent buildings) and designed to be of interest to people as they stroll by; parking should not be located in front of buildings but rather behind or on the side of buildings. Landscaping and streetscape amenities should be provided (benches, ornamental lighting, decorative surfaces, street trees, etc). Sufficient minimum height (one and a half to two and a half stories) is recommended to allow for a vertical mix of uses and to reduce travel needs; sufficient maximum height of no more than 3-4 stories is recommended to retain a pedestrian-friendly village scale.

Outdoor Activity – Outdoor uses and activities are very important to attracting residents and visitors to West Concord. This may include formal areas such as recreational playing fields and the future Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, but should also include accessory uses such as limited outdoor retail displays, outdoor dining, entertainment events, farmers’ markets, and other attractive uses along the Main Street/Commonwealth Avenue corridor. In the village center, sidewalk cafés can generate new business and encourage additional pedestrian traffic, give identity and vitality to the central business district, serve as a special attraction, and enhance the aesthetic quality of community life.



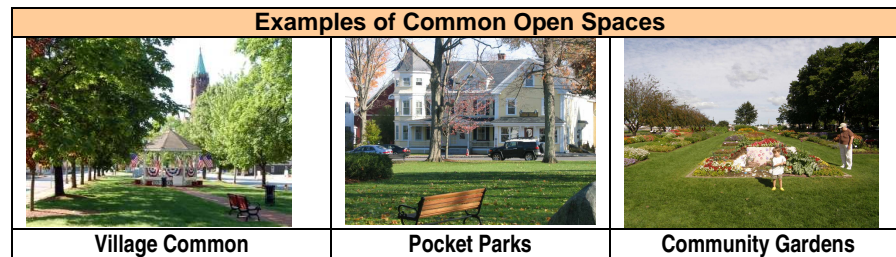
Smart Growth and Sustainable Development – New development standards and design guidelines for West Concord village center should be based on the principles of smart growth and sustainable development, which are intended to protect open spaces, efficiently utilize local infrastructure and services, and invigorate existing employment centers and neighborhoods. As applied to West Concord village center, this means providing for a higher density of job and housing opportunities, enhancing the current mix of uses, improving intermodal transportation, enhancing high-quality civic amenities such as trails and open spaces, and constructing public buildings and sites that minimize the impacts on the natural environment.

A “Place of Necessity” – If West Concord village center is to remain competitive with other commercial districts locally and regionally, its plan must focus on providing a mix of uses that are essential and desirable to local residents on a daily basis such as food, common household goods, entertainment, recreation, education, and employment. It must also have the flexibility to attract new investments which provide for a mix of uses and opportunities that will serve residents and visitors and reflect the village’s traditional civic character. The village center must be reinforced as a “place of necessity” for local residents and a place of interest to regional residents and visitors.

The “Civic Core” – The “civic core” theme is based on existing and proposed public facilities primarily located in the village center, which include: government buildings and services such as libraries or community centers, public parks, and other civic amenities. New public facilities and open spaces should complement rather than compete with other civic uses in the community, and provide forums for public gatherings and community activities. They should be within walking distance for most residents and linked together by streetscape enhancements including sidewalks, trails, street trees, furnishings, and civic art. These enhancements should create an element of formality in these common spaces and acknowledge civic values.

Network of Recreational Trails – Alternative transportation corridors, such as bicycle and walking trails, can reduce parking demand and traffic congestion in the village center. Sidewalk improvements and extensions should be a high priority on existing and potential future public streets. New bike and pedestrian corridors, including the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and pathways along the Nashoba Brook and Assabet River, should serve a dual purpose of providing recreational opportunities as well as viable transportation connections between the village center,

surrounding neighborhoods, and regional destinations. These “linear parks” should be well defined with signage, pavement markings at roadway crossings, and bicycle racks. They should also be coordinated with other existing and proposed neighborhood trail systems, and connect with other existing or planned public places (e.g., recreation centers, schools, cemeteries, and parks) in the community.



Historic and Cultural Center – The West Concord village center should be recognized as a high-quality district for the arts, entertainment, and history that becomes a hub for local and regional cultural activities. The village center theme should build upon West Concord’s extensive history and traditional settlement pattern. It should become a site of mixed venues and support services for growing a creative economy such as art exhibits and galleries, music and theater productions, dining, and shopping. It should also serve as a business incubator for local tradesmen, artists, and entrepreneurs.

Employment Center – The West Concord village center should continue to serve as a primary employment center for local residents with a growing mix of commercial and retail services, and light industrial jobs. The village center should also continue to serve as an informal business incubator for local tradesmen, artists, and entrepreneurs.

Appropriate Development to Serve Local and Sub-Regional Market – Small to medium-sized, mixed-use infill buildings (5,000 to 10,000 square feet) may be appropriate in specific locations in the village center. These buildings should be high quality and consistent in terms of design and use with the established development pattern and fabric of West Concord. Many of them would include a mix of commercial uses on the ground floor and residential and office uses on the upper floors. Traditional building layouts are essential, with the buildings located at or near the front property line and parking located to the rear. Architectural designs and patterns should follow the traditional styles and materials used in the region. Much of this form of infill development could occur directly on Main Street and Commonwealth Avenue.

The Desired Mix of Uses in West Concord Village Center

Desired new or enhanced uses are identified based on public workshops and WCTF discussions:

- Educational, institutional, light industrial, and small professional or research and development facilities.
- Small medical offices to serve the local population.
- Professional and personal services for the local population.
- Moderate-density housing development providing opportunities for varying age and income groups.
- Small accommodations (i.e. B&Bs, boutique hotels, inns) with meeting spaces.
- Recreational facilities including formal and informal open spaces for passive and active recreational activities.
- Non-franchise and locally owned retail establishments providing for local needs as well as selected clusters such as natural foods and high quality home improvement products to attract regional interest.
- Public gathering venues for a farmers’ market, live entertainment, and regular festivals and events.
- Artist work/live spaces, cooperative galleries, performing arts and music venues, and other locally-oriented cultural attractions.
- Intermodal transportation services and facilities including MBTA platform improvements, and vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle enhancements.
- Locally owned and non-formula restaurants and other food and entertainment businesses.

Traditional Village Neighborhoods – The existing and potential village housing serves as the primary market for the village center and a magnet for other types of private business investment in West Concord. New residential

development should be integrated into the established fabric of West Concord village center and surrounding neighborhoods through compatible infill housing developments and small neighborhoods that are laid out with traditional development characteristics. This development should include a variety of housing types to meet the income and age demands of the community today and in the future. Traditional neighborhoods are characterized by smaller house lots with the homes placed closer to the sidewalk, front porches, narrow tree-lined streets, common open space, and regional architecture. Residential development in the village center should be primarily for existing and new residents who will use local services and travel to and from the village primarily on foot or by commuter rail. New residential and mixed-use development should blend in with the existing built environment. Residential streets should retain their character as narrow (18 to 22 feet), tree-lined corridors with sidewalks.

Lifecycle Housing – With a limited supply of land, moderate-density residential development is appropriate. New residential units would contribute positively to the economic development potential of the West Concord village center and can be used to increase the tax base by providing a mix of smaller-sized units that have a higher quality construction and an adaptive design that allows the unit to be modified for people with varying needs. Residential infill and redevelopment should vary in style such as townhouse or mixed-use buildings with residential units above first floor commercial space. Established residential neighborhoods could provide “lifecycle” opportunities as well for residents in various age and income ranges, which may be facilitated by creating “in-law” apartments and other secondary dwelling units within existing residential structures. New residential development should incorporate the attractive architecture and traditional neighborhood development patterns that are well defined in the village.